DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 165 601 HE 010 856

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TITLE A Comparison of Transfer Students and Incoming Freshmen Who Entered the University of Maryland, College Park, in Fall, 1975. Research Report #12-77.
INSTITUTION Maryland Univ., College Park. Counseling Center.
PUB DATE 77
NOTE 14p.
AVAILABLE FROM Counseling Center, University of Maryland, College Park, MD 20742 ($1.50)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Freshmen; *College Students; Comparative Statistics; Differences; Grades (Scholastic); Higher Education; Income; Institutional Research; Marital Status; Place of Residence; Questionnaires; Research Projects; School Surveys; State Universities; *Student Attitudes; *Student Characteristics; Student Distribution; *Transfer Students
IDENTIFIERS *University of Maryland College Park

ABSTRACT

Responses of a sample of 1533 incoming freshmen and 310 transfer students who entered the University of Maryland, College Park, in Fall 1975 were compared on a number of demographic and attitudinal items. Results showed that transfer students and incoming freshmen were more similar than different on the items compared. Differences were found in marital status, income from part-time jobs, grades reported from previous schools, place of residence, and students' perceptions of what had contributed most to their own development during the previous year. Statistical data from responses to survey questions and a bibliography are appended. (Author/LBH)

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A COMPARISON OF TRANSFER STUDENTS AND INCOMING FRESHMEN WHO ENTERED THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND, COLLEGE PARK IN FALL, 1975

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Summary

Responses of a sample of incoming freshmen (N=1533) and transfer students (N=310) who entered the University of Maryland, College Park, in Fall, 1975 were compared on a number of demographic and attitudinal items. Results showed that transfer students and incoming freshmen were more similar than different on the items compared. Differences were found in marital status, income from part-time jobs, grades reported from previous schools, place of residence, and students' perceptions of what had contributed most to their own development during the previous year.

Do transfer students differ significantly from entering freshmen? Relatively little is known about transfer students, although they represent one of the growing groups in higher education. Most studies have centered on the academic achievment and attrition of two year junior college students who have transferred to four year institutions (Fago and Sedlacek, 1976). Some studies provide evidence that transfer students do at least as well academically as do native students (Hoyt, 1960; Martorana & Williams, 1954), while other studies show that native students perform better (Henderson and Sedlacek, 1969; Lindsay, Marks and Hamel, 1966; Klitzke, 1961; Medsker, 1960). Transfer students have also been found to have a significantly higher rate of attrition (Lindsay, et al., 1966). Although little work has been done on the personality characteristics of transfer students, at least one study (Rose & Elton, 1970) suggests that transfer students are basically a homogeneous group that differs very little from regular students .

The purpose of this study was to compare transfer students and incoming freshmen who entered the University of Maryland, College Park, in the fall of 1975 on a number of demographic and attitudinal items. A 22-item questionnaire was administered to a sample (N=310; 52% male, 48% female) of transfer students who entered the University in Fall of 1975. Fifteen of the items in the questionnaire were taken from the University Student Census (USC), and an additional seven questions relevant only to transfer students were added to the instrument. The USC is a questionnaire containing demographic and attitudinal items which was administered to a representative sample (N=1533; 51% male, 47% female[1]) of incoming freshmen who attended the two-day freshman orientation sessions in summer, 1975. Freshman data presented in this study were taken from a report on the 1975 USC findings (Handley and Sedlacek, 1975).

Data on Transfer Students Only

Almost half (48%) of the transfer students said they had transferred from a two-year college, 46% had transferred from another 4-year college, and 5% from

[1]Percentages may not add to 100% due to rounding and missing data.

another branch of the University of Maryland. There were intereseting sex differences here - although more men (53% male, 43% female) had transferred from a two-year college, the reverse was true of transfers coming from four-year colleges (42% males, 52% females). When asked how many times they had transferred, 76% of the sample reported that they had transferred once, 17% said twice, 5% reported three times, and 1% more than three times. The majority (77%) of the transfer students said the last time they had attended another school was "last semester," 10% said "a year ago," 5% checked "two years ago," 2% indicated three years ago, and 6% of the sample marked "more than 3 years ago." The mean number of semester credits completed was 47, the median 54.

Attitudes toward the University

Transfer students were asked: How did you learn about the University of Maryland? The largest number (33%) said from friends, 25% said from family, 18% through catalogues and brochures, and 12% from public information (radio, T.V., etc.). Only 4% replied from a teacher or counselor at a previous college. While incoming freshmen were not asked this particular question, they were asked who had been most influential in their decision to attend college. Here family members were the overwhelming choice of the respondents (father 38%, mother 22%, other relative 7%), with friends (9%) and high school teacher or counselor (9%), running far behind. Both transfer students and freshmen indicated that the University of Maryland had been their first choice of school to attend (transfer students 81%, freshmen 64%). They chose the University of Maryland primarily because it offered the kind of academic program they wanted (transfers 36%, freshmen 32%), because of its geographical location (transfers 28%, freshmen 23%), or because it was relatively inexpensive (transfers 24%, freshmen 26%). When asked if they expected to feel a sense of identification with the University, both transfer students and incoming freshmen responded similarly (Agree/strongly agree: transfers 64%, freshmen 71%; Neutral: transfers 26%, freshmen 20%; Disagree/strongly dis-

agree: transfers 4%, freshmen 9%).

There was almost complete agreement between the transfer students and the freshmen on the question: What do you think is the major function of the University of Maryland? Both chose to provide a general learning facility (freshmen 47%, transfers 44%) as their first choice; second choice of both samples was to develop personal and social skills of people (freshmen 32%; transfers 24%), and third choice was preparing people for jobs (freshmen 12%, transfers 16%). Neither group considered serving as a force for social change (freshmen 3%, transfers 6%), or training and developing researchers (freshmen 2%, transfers 2%) important.

Educational Aspirations

There were interesting differences by sex and between transfer students and freshmen on the question of educational aspirations. More men (37%) transfer students than women (31%) transfer students indicated that the highest degree they intended to obtain was a bachelor's degree, while among incoming freshmen the number of women (38%) students seeking a terminal bachelor's degree was higher than that of the men (27%). More women planned to terminate their education with a Master's degree in both groups (transfer students: males 26%, females 40%; freshmen: males 30%, females 36%). However, at the highest levels of education, male aspirations were consistently higher than female aspirations (Doctoral level: transfer students, males 18%, females 11%; freshmen, males 14%, females 11%). It is interesting to note the large discrepancy between the aspirations of incoming freshmen and transfer students with reference to professional degrees. Medical degree: transfer students, males 3%, females 3%; freshmen, males 15%, females 7%; Law degree: transfers, males 3%, females 1%; freshmen, males 8%, females 4%.

Incoming freshmen reported higher grades at their previous school than did transfer students (A or A+: freshman 19%, transfers 11%; B or B+, freshmen 68%, transfers 56%; C or C+, freshmen 12%, transfers 28%). However, it must be kept in mind that the incoming freshmen are reporting grades earned in high school,

while transfer students are reporting grades earned in another college or university. More interesting, perhaps, than the differences shown above were the transfer students' responses to the question: What grades to you expect to earn in your first semester at the University of Maryland? Although only 11% of the transfer students reported grades of A or A+ at their previous institution, 20% of them indicated that they expected to receive an A or A+ in their first semester at the University of Maryland, 68% reported that they expected to get either a B or B+ (compared to 56% who had earned B or B+ at their former school), and only 11% expected to receive a C or C+ grade, although 28% of them had received C or C+ at their previous school. These expectations seem somewhat unrealistic in view of previous research which showed that transfer students were found to have significantly lower grades than non-transfers at the University of Maryland (Henderson and Sedlacek, 1969).

Both samples were asked to choose one thing which was most important to them in their long-term career choice. Here, again, responses differed somewhat by sex and group, although both female transfers (17%) and female freshmen (30%) selected "work with people," as most important to them, and all four groups included "job openings generally available and rapid career advancement possible," among their top three choices (see Table 1 for selections by sex and group).

Answers to the question: Which one of the following contributed most to your own development during the past year? showed the most significant differences between incoming freshmen and transfer students. Almost half (47%) of the freshmen chose socially oriented responses (friendships made; 23%; social life, 24%), while 15% selected job experience, and only 14% picked academically oriented responses (individual/independent study, 9%; course work, 5%). This contrasts sharply with responses given by the transfer students, whose first choices were academic (31%) (course work, 17%; individual/independent study, 14%)

and job experience (22%), while friendships made (14%) and social life (6%) were selected by fewer than half as many transfer students as freshmen.

Social Attitudes

Incoming freshmen and transfer students responded similarly to the item: "Which one of the following kinds of campus extra curricular activities of of most interest to you?" The largest percentage of male students indicated interest in participating in intramural and intercollegiate athletics (freshmen, 39%; transfers, 31%), while the largest number of female transfer students selected "musical or dramatic organizations"(19%), and the freshmen female students chose "special interest groups" (22%). A complete description of responses to this item will be found in Table 2.

When asked:"Which of the following issues do you feel is currently most important for society to resolve?" transfer students chose ecology/pollution (27%), economy/inflation (24%), integrity of those with power (12%), and racism (9%) as most important. Incoming freshmen reversed the top choices of the transfer students and selected economy/inflation (34%) and ecology/pollution (19%), followed by racism (12%) and integrity of those with power and the energy crisis (9% each).

In order to obtain data for the Athletic Department (in response to Title IX legislation), students were asked: "What is the best way to handle allocation of funds to male and female athletics?" Responses from both samples were similar, except that significantly more transfer students (37%) than freshmen (25%) marked the response "other." 47% of the freshmen and 41% of the transfers chose: "Learn how comparable schools finance their programs and use results as a guide to allocating funds." Other responses were: "Cut back men's programs," (freshmen 6%, transfers, 9%), and "cut back women's programs" (freshmen 1%, transfers, 2%).

Demographic Data

Over three-fourths of the transfer students (78%) reported that they had never been married, 19% said they were currently married, 2% said they had been divorced, and fewer than 1% widowed. This contrasts with data available on a sample of the 1375 incoming freshmen (N=231) who were asked in an anonymous poll to respond to the question: "Are you married?" To this, 99.8% of the sample responded "no," while only two-tenths of one percent said "yes."

There were some differences by sex when the students were asked about working on a part-time job. 51% of each of the male samples said they did not have a part-time job, although more than half of each group (freshmen 26%, transfers 30%) indicated they hoped to fine one. More women than men indicated they did not have a part-time job (freshmen 62%, transfers 50%), and more than half of each sample of women said they did not plan to work (freshmen 33%, transfers 28%). However, there were almost no differences between the samples in the number of hours per week they planned to work (see Table 3).

As expected, there were differences by sex on the question of income from the part-time job, and a greater percentage of transfer students reported larger incomes than incoming freshmen. Incomes under $40/per week were reported by 25% of the freshmen males and 24% of the freshmen females, while 22% of each of the transfer student samples reported incomes in that bracket. In contrast, 36% of the male and 24% of the female transfer students expected to earn more than $40/per week, while 25% of the male freshmen and only 15% of the female freshmen expected their earnings to be above that figure.

Not surprisingly, there was a large significant difference between the number of freshmen planning to live on campus (37%) and the number of transfer students (9%) planning to do so. More transfer students also planned to live farther from campus than did freshman students (see Table 4).

Conclusions

Results of this study show that incoming freshmen and transfer students who entered the University of Maryland in Fall, 1975 were similar in many respects. They agreed that the University of Maryland had been their first choice of school and on their reasons for selecting the University of Maryland (because it offered the kind of academic program they wanted, because of its geographical location, or because it was relatively inexpensive), that they expected to feel a sense of identification with the University, and on their idea of the major functions of the University (to provide a general learning facility, develop personal and social skills of people, and prepare people for jobs). They were generally in agreement on the factors important to them in their long-term career choices, the kinds of campus extra-curricular activities that were of interest to them, the issues they considered important for society to resolve, and the best way to handle the allocation of funds for male and female athletics to conform to Title IX legislation. There were almost no differences in the number of hours they would be working on part-time jobs, and the sample breakdown by sex was almost identical (transfers, male = 52%; transfers, female = 48%; freshmen male = 51%, freshmen, female = 47%).

Differences were found in marital status (22% of the transfer students either were currently married or had been married compared to two-tenths of one percent of the incoming freshmen); income from part-time jobs (transfer students expected to earn more money than did incoming freshmen); grades reported (freshmen consistently reported higher grades in their previous school than did transfer students); educational aspirations (more women planned to terminate their education with a Master's degree among both incoming freshmen and transfer students, and considerably more incoming freshmen than transfer students aspired to medical and law degrees); place of residence (37% of the freshmen planned to live on campus compared to 9% of the transfer students); and students' perceptions of

what had contributed most to their own development during the previous year (freshmen chose socially oriented responses, while transfer students selected academic and job experiences).

Wrenn's (1967) conclusion that "transfers are freshmen in every sense of the word except for a few more years of general maturity and some additional academic content gathered elsewhere," still seems appropriate for this population.

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Table 1.

Responses of Freshmen and Transfer Students to the Question:

Which one of the following is most important to you in your long-term career choice?

	Freshmen		Transfer Students	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%
1. Job openings generally available and rapid career advancement possible	16	15	23	19
2. High anticipated earnings	17	04	04	07
3. Well respected or prestigious occupation	04	07	08	04
4. Great deal of independence	06	06	12	14
5. Make an important contribution to society	15	14	16	15
6. Avoid pressure	02	02	02	02
7. Work with ideas	04	05	04	09
8. Work with people	10	30	06	17
9. Intrinsic interest in the field	17	15	13	10

Table 2.

Percent of Freshmen and Transfer Student Responses to : Which one of the following kinds of campus extra-curricular activities are of most interest to you?

Activities	Freshmen		Transfer Students	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%
1. Student publications/communications (newspaper, WMUC, yearbook)	10	16	9	10
2. Musical or dramatic organizations (band, theater, chorus, etc.)	13	18	10	19
3. Intramural or intercollegiate athletics	39	15	31	16
4. Volunteer services	02	10	03	06
5. Political or social action groups (MaryPIRG, political parties, etc.)	04	04	07	03
6. Religious groups	02	04	03	01
7. Special interest groups (hobbies, vocational interest groups, etc.)	23	22	13	12
8. Departmental or subject matter clubs	02	03	10	10
9. Other	05	05	09	15

Table 3.

Percent of freshmen and Transfer Student Responses to: How many hours will you be spending per week on a part-time job?

	Freshmen		Transfer Students	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%
1. Do not have one but hope to get one	26	29	30	22
2. Do not have one, do not plan to work	25	33	21	28
3. 1-9 hours per week	09	06	10	10
4. 10-14 hours per week	11	09	08	09
5. 15-19 hours per week	10	09	10	10
6. 20-29 hours per week	09	07	10	12
7. 30-39 hours per week	03	03	05	03
8. More than 40 hours per week	02	01	02	02
9. Other	04	03	03	03

Table 4.

Percent of Freshmen and Transfer Student Responses to: How far from campus will you be living this fall?

	Freshmen	Transfer Students
	%	%
1. I will be living on campus (in a residence hall or fraternity/sorority house)	37	09
2. Less than 3 miles each way	09	15
3. 3-5 miles each way	07	15
4. 6-10 miles each way	11	14
5. 11-50 miles each way	21	31
6. 51 miles or more each way	01	02
7. Not yet sure where I will be living	12	12